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DOT Launches Massive, Nationwide *Click It or Ticket* Mobilization

By Ellen Martin,
Office of Communications and
Consumer Information

May 12, 2003. Washington, DC. The largest-ever law enforcement program to increase safety belt use in America was launched in Washington on May 12 by DOT Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. This year's massive *Click It or Ticket* campaign specifically targeted young drivers.

"Inexperience behind the wheel, combined with the exuberance of youth, often yields tragic results," Secretary Mineta said, in announcing the new campaign at a media briefing at the National Press Club.

NHTSA data show that teens (16- to 19-year-olds) are at higher risk of being in a car crash and less likely to use safety belts than other age groups. Based on the agency's preliminary statistics, America lost 4,942 teens, ages 16-19, in traffic crashes in 2002, and thousands more were injured.

Fatalities for teens are twice that of persons 35 years and older and the crash involvement rates for teen drivers are three times that of drivers in their 40s and 50s. Two out of five deaths among teens are the result of a traffic crash.

Secretary Mineta emphasized that while this year's national mobilization focused on teens and young adults, the message applies to everyone. "If you are not buckled up, you will be stopped, you will be ticketed, and your license to drive could be at risk," he said.

More than 12,000 law enforcement agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico conducted safety belt checkpoints and other special law enforcement activities as part of the campaign.

"Despite years of effort, safety belt use in this country stands at just 75 percent, and even lower at 69 percent among teens and young adults," said NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff

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NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge remarks, "Despite years of effort, safety belt use in this country stands at just 75 percent, and even lower at 69 percent among teens and young adults. The only proven way to achieve significant increases in seat belt use is through strong laws and highly visible enforcement of those laws. So today we are putting people on notice to click it, or expect a ticket."

Dr. Runge and Top Cops Kick Off Tri-State Mobilization Campaign

By Richard Simon, Region II

May 12, 2003. New York, NY. High above the bustling traffic of New York City, NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeffrey W. Runge helped launch the tri-state area's *Click It or Ticket* mobilization efforts at a press conference held on the 80th floor of the Empire State Building. Joining Dr. Runge were Superintendent James

McMahon of the New York State Police, Acting Superintendent Joseph Fuentes of the New Jersey State Police and Colonel Timothy Barry of the Connecticut State Police—the first time ever the leaders of these three state agencies banded together to publicize its traffic safety enforcement efforts.

Other notables were present, too,

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Dr. Runge and Top Cops Kick Off Tri-State Mobilization Campaign

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including NY governor's representative Raymond Martinez, CT governor's representative Susan Maloney, NYPD Chief Michael Scagnelli, Jersey City Mayor Glenn Cunningham, and a host of significant players

who comprise the *Tri-State Traffic Safety Partners*, including members of state police chiefs and sheriffs associations, SAFE KIDS coalitions, local hospitals, AAA clubs and other health, safety and advocacy groups. Our State and local law enforcement partners

conducted five checkpoints within the tri-state area immediately afterwards to provide photo opportunities to the media outlets to augment the footage and sound bites from the press event.

Media representation at the event and checkpoints was diverse, as well. New York City affiliates of all the major networks—CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox and UPN—all covered the event, as did Spanish-language Univision, Telemundo and El Diaro. In all, it is estimated that through TV alone, 5 million people were reached by this event. ■



NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge addressing the audience at the Empire State Building.



Featured speakers (l. to r.) Col. Timothy Barry, CT State Police; Chief Michael Scagnelli, NYC Police Department; NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge; Acting Supt. Joseph "Rick" Fuentes, NJ State Police; Supt. James McMahon, NY State Police.

NHTSA Releases Preliminary Estimates Of 2002 Highway Fatalities

**By Rae Tyson,
Office of Communications and
Consumer Information**

Alcohol-related highway fatalities increased again in 2002 while the majority of passenger vehicle occupants killed were not wearing safety belts, according to preliminary estimates from NHTSA.

With overall highway fatalities also up slightly from 2001, the grim statistics underscore the need for better state laws that address the causes of the problem and stricter enforcement. In 2002, an estimated 42,850 people died on the nation's highways, up from 42,116 in 2001. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) remained unchanged at 1.51, according to preliminary estimates. It was the highest number of fatalities since 1990.

"If we are ever going to reduce the needless deaths on the nation's highways, we're going to need the American public to bear greater responsibility for their personal safety," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta.

Fatalities in rollover crashes involving sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks accounted for 53 percent of the increase in traffic deaths. In 2002, 10,626 people died in

rollover crashes, up 4.9 percent from 10,130 in 2001.

The preliminary report also notes some significant progress. NHTSA said that deaths of children seven and under dropped to historic low levels. In 2002, 980 children seven and under were killed, down from 1,053 in 2001. Pedestrian deaths also declined to 4,776, a 2.2 percent drop from 2001. The number of persons injured in crashes also declined from an estimated 3,033,000 in 2001 to 2,914,000 in 2002, almost a four percent drop.

NHTSA earlier estimated that highway crashes cost society \$230.6 billion a year, about \$820 per person.

"As a nation, we should be outraged over the loss of nearly 43,000 of our friends, neighbors and family members," said NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey Runge, M.D. "All of us—individuals as well as government—should resolve to make highway safety our highest public health priority."

The preliminary 2002 statistics also continue to show the increased risk of death and injury when drivers and passengers do not wear safety belts: 59 percent of those killed in crashes last year were not belted.

NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) also shows that, in 2002:

- Motorcycle fatalities increased for the fifth year in a row following years of steady improvement. A total of 3,276 riders died, up three percent from 2001. Deaths among riders 50 and over increased 24 percent.
- Of the total, alcohol-related deaths in 2002 accounted for 42 percent—17,970 deaths—up from 41 percent (17,448) in 2001. Deaths in low alcohol crashes (.01-.07 blood alcohol content) dropped 7.2 percent to 2,335 deaths. Deaths of persons in high alcohol crashes (.08 BAC and above) rose 4.7 percent. Alcohol-related fatalities have been rising steadily since 1999.
- Fatalities from large truck crashes dropped from 5,082 in 2001 to 4,902 in 2002, a 3.5 percent decline.
- Young drivers (16-20) were involved in 7,722 fatal crashes in 2002, up slightly from 7,598 in 2001.
- The number of occupant fatalities for children ages eight to 15 increased by nearly nine percent.
- In 2002, vehicle miles traveled increased slightly to 2.83 trillion, up from 2.78 trillion in 2001, according to the DOT's Federal Highway Administration.

NHTSA annually collects crash statistics from 50 states and the District of Columbia to produce the annual report on traffic fatality trends. The final 2002 report, pending completion of data collection and quality control verification, will be available in August. Summaries of the preliminary report are available on the NHTSA website at: www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov. ■

NHTSA, Ford and the Governors Highway Safety Association Launch *Real World Driver: Driving Skills for Life*

Program designed to avert thousands of teen driving deaths each year

May 8, 2003. Dearborn, MI. For teenagers, obtaining a driver's license is a significant rite of passage, a sign that they're growing up and ready to accept the responsibility of operating a motor vehicle. Unfortunately, this exciting time for teenagers can also be dangerous. According to NHTSA, more than 6,000 teens die each year from injuries resulting from car crashes—making it the number one killer of teens in America. Yet in a survey conducted as part of the program's development, 56 percent of Americans named drug abuse as the leading health threat teenagers face, with only 13 percent identifying teen driving crashes as the number one threat.

To help raise awareness and fight back against this serious youth health issue, Ford Motor Company, along with the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and NHTSA announced the launch of *Real World Driver: Driving Skills for Life* at a press conference in Dearborn, Michigan.

Real World Driver is a multi-year, educational campaign aimed at teens, parents and the education community. The program includes a teacher's guide, video and other materials that are being distributed to every public high school in the country (more than 20,000 schools). An interactive Web site — www.realworlddriver.com — also has been launched to give students and parents more information about driving skills and provide visitors the opportunity to take a quiz online for a chance to win exciting prizes.

"Unfortunately, car crashes remain the number one killer of our teens. Yet, the good

news is that most of the crashes and resulting injuries and deaths could be prevented if teenagers better understood the necessary skills for safely driving motor vehicles," Susan Cischke, vice president of Environmental and Safety Engineering said at the launch. "*Real World Driver* has been designed to illustrate for young drivers safe driving techniques in key areas that safety experts say

are of particular importance to novice drivers."

The program focuses on the four key driving skills young drivers should master: hazard recognition, vehicle handling, space management and speed management.

"*Real World Driver* complements graduated licensing laws because it attempts to teach teens what they need to know to be successful drivers," said NHTSA Regional Administrator Don McNamara. "It starts with the importance of buckling up and avoiding alcohol ... and then describes four key driving skills."

Ford, GHSA and *Car and Driver* will take the demonstrations on the road this fall to major cities around the country to ensure that teens nationwide have the opportunity to practice the four critical driving skills first-hand. ■



Pictured from left to right: Susan Cischke, Vice President, Environmental and Safety Engineering, Ford Motor Company; Kathryn Swanson, Chair, Governors Highway Safety Association; Donald McNamara, NHTSA Region Administrator; Chief Michael Geraci, Schenectady Police Department; Tony Bucko, SADD student.

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Runge. "The only proven way to achieve significant increases in safety belt use is through strong laws and highly visible enforcement of those laws."

The national *Click It or Ticket* campaign is conducted in May and November by NHTSA and the *Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign* of the National Safety Council. This spring's mobilization ran from May 19 through the Memorial Day holiday and was supported by more than \$20 million dollars in targeted state and national advertising.

"The placement of the ads is targeted to reach those least likely to buckle up and most likely to die in a vehicle crash," said Chuck

Hurley, Executive Director of the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign. "The ads reach young people who we traditionally can't reach effectively through the news media."

During the Mobilization, law enforcement officers intensified enforcement of safety belt and child passenger safety laws by setting up checkpoints and saturation patrols. Safety belt violators and drivers failing to restrain their child passengers were ticketed.

"Cops don't want to write tickets, but they will—because tickets get people to buckle up," said Joseph Samuels, President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and Chief of the Richmond, California Police Department.

U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona pointed out that not all public health challenges have such a clear solution. "We face intractable and complex public health problems everyday. This is one problem that has a simple solution—buckling up. Strong laws and enforcement are proven to change behavior," he said. ■

NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) recently released a Research Note, "Alcohol Involvement in Fatal Motorcycle Crashes" (DOT HS 809 576). This note takes a detailed look at alcohol involvement in fatal motorcycle crashes by analyzing the data relating to who were involved and where and when the crashes occur.

The report is available on NCSA's web page, <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2003/809-576.pdf>. ■

NHTSA Report on Pedestrian Crashes Generates Media Interest

April 22, 2003. The headlines varied from *Drinkers more often auto victims* (MSNBC) to *Elderly are high-risk pedestrians* (Associated Press) to *Almost 1 in 5 Pedestrian Deaths Are Tied to Hit and Run Drivers* (New York Times.)

The report, NHTSA's most recent analysis of pedestrian fatalities, analyzes the incidence of pedestrian fatalities in single vehicle crashes, which accounted for more than 90 percent of all pedestrian fatalities. The report focuses on pedestrian fatalities between 1998 and 2001. The research report also ranks states and the District of Columbia in terms of their pedestrian fatality rates (per 100,000 population) for the year 2001.

Pedestrian fatalities now account for about 12 percent of all deaths related to motor vehicle crashes in the country.

The 56-page research report, prepared by NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis, is available on the agency's website at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/Rpts/2003/809-456.pdf>. ■



2002 GEICO Public Service Award Presented

April 7, 2003. Washington DC. Congratulations to Region VI's Kenneth W. Copeland, the recipient of the 2002 GEICO Public Service Award for traffic safety and crash prevention. Ken is a regional program manager in Ft. Worth, Texas, and is responsible for the coordination of the region's programs dealing with youth, elderly, alcohol, motorcycles and commercial vehicle safety issues.

Copeland created and marketed the *Buckle Up America: Because Life is a Long Haul* public awareness campaign as a partnership between NHTSA and the transportation industry in the Region VI states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and the Indian nations.

During the last five years, Copeland has identified, contacted and built successful partnerships with dozens of large motor carriers and several State trucking associations in the region, resulting in more than 50,000 *Buckle Up America!* messages being placed on commercial vehicles designed to remind thousands of people each day to always use safety belts.

There is no way to measure exactly how many lives have been saved or injuries prevented through the *Buckle Up America: Because Life is a Long Haul* campaign; however, Copeland has made an incredible contribution to raise awareness of the value of safety belts throughout Region VI and the country. ■



Kenneth Copeland and wife Lisha at the GEICO Public Service Award ceremonies April 7.

Three Senior Executives Join NHTSA

On May 12th, Susan White joined NHTSA as its 1st executive level Chief Information Officer (CIO). Ms. White is former Deputy CIO at GSA, has significant IT experience in the public and private sectors, and is certain to be of great benefit to the agency and DOT.

On May 19th, Brian McLaughlin and Ronald Medford joined NHTSA. Mr. McLaughlin has prior NHTSA experience and most recently served as Associate Administrator for Policy and Program Development in FMCSA. Mr. McLaughlin will serve as Senior Associate Administrator for Traffic Injury Control. He previously served in a variety of capacities within NHTSA, including Director of Regional Operations. Mr. Medford, former Assistant Executive Director for Hazard Identification and Reduction at CPSC, will serve as Senior Associate Administrator for Vehicle Safety. Mr. Medford has a science background in the areas of engineering and product safety. ■

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."